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C O N F I D E N T I A L ZAGREB 000122

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/SCE, EUR/RPM, L/T

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [NATO](#) [HR](#)

SUBJECT: CROATIA SPEEDING UP ITS DOMESTIC NATO RATIFICATION  
PROCESS TO BE READY FOR SUMMIT

REF: A. LJUBLJANA 0057

[B.](#) ZAGREB 00040

[C.](#) MEHLIN-HOLLERAN EMAILS 3/2/2009

Classified By: PolOfficer Peter D'Amico, for reasons 1.4(b) & (d).

[¶1.](#) (C) Summary: The GoC told post it was speeding up its own domestic NATO ratification process due to the potentially tight timeframe for Slovenia to finalize the ratification of Croatia's accession protocol. The GoC said it would be ready to deposit its instrument of accession in Washington as soon as the Secretary General issued the invitation for Croatia to accede to the North Atlantic Treaty. To facilitate this process the GoC would have the signed instrument of accession positioned in advance at the Croatian Embassy in Washington so that it could be deposited quickly. Croatian officials estimate the domestic ratification process would take approximately two weeks and be finished around March 18. However, there is growing concern in Zagreb that the timeline for the ratification in Slovenia will not leave enough time for Croatia to become a full member of the alliance before the April 3 and 4 Summit.

[¶2.](#) (C) On March 3 Marko Horvat, Director of the MFA's NATO Department., said that given the potentially tight timeframe for Slovenia to finalize the ratification of Croatia's accession protocol (ref A), the GoC was speeding up its own domestic ratification process. The GoC plans to be ready to deposit its instrument of accession in Washington as soon as the Secretary General issues the invitation for Croatia to accede to the North Atlantic Treaty. Horvat said that on March 3 the MFA had sent out finalized draft legislation of Croatia's NATO accession protocols to all the relevant ministries. Since the ministries have already had a chance to comment (ref B), this process is more of a formality and will end by March 5. The Foreign Minister would then sign the document and send it to the GoC, which would then need to hold a formal session to discuss the draft before it was submitted to the Sabor. The formal GoC session would likely take place on March 12.

[¶3.](#) (C) After the formal government meeting takes place the GoC will send the draft to the Sabor. Horvat said that once the GoC submits the draft to the Sabor, it could vote at any time. He anticipates no problems in getting overwhelming support from the members of the Sabor. President Mesic will be ready to sign soon after the Sabor approves the legislation. If necessary the GoC would also speed up the publication of legislation in Croatia's official register, following Mesic's signing, so it could take effect as soon as possible. Horvat estimated that the entire process of domestic ratification could be done in approximately 15 days.

[¶4.](#) (C) Once the process is complete the GoC would send the signed instrument of accession sent to the Croatian Embassy

in Washington so that Croatia could deposit the document there as soon as it received the invitation from the Secretary General. Horvat also noted that the Croatian Embassy in Washington was working with the Department to make sure Croatia's instrument of accession was properly drafted (ref C).

¶ 15. (C) In a separate meeting on March 4 Visnja Tafra, President Mesic's Defense Advisor, said that the President will be ready to sign both the document the Sabor passed and the instrument of accession. The President's office would then quickly contact the official register to get it published. Tafra confirmed that a the instrument of accession with Mesic's signature will be sent to Washington to wait for the invitation from the Secretary General. Tafra also estimated that the domestic ratification process would take approximately two weeks from the date of the discussion, which would be around March 18.

¶ 16. (C) Comment. There is growing concern within the GoC that the timeline for the ratification in Slovenia will not leave enough time for Croatia to become a full member of the alliance before the April 3 and 4 Summit. The Croatians are doing what they can to speed up their domestic ratification process, but they will increasingly look for other members of the Alliance to help constructively move the ratification process in Slovenia to a timely conclusion.

BRADTKE